



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
GOVERNANCE FOR COMMUNICATIONS INTEROPERABILITY

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INTRODUCTION

Reliable, real time, and adequate wireless interoperable communications is a high priority for Virginia's Governor, Secretary of the Office of Public Safety, and Assistant for Commonwealth Preparedness. In December 2003, the position of Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator (CIC) was created to focus on improving interoperability within the Commonwealth.

The mission of the CIC is to improve public safety response in the Commonwealth through enhanced data and voice communications interoperability. In collaboration with the federal SAFECOM program, the Commonwealth developed a locally-driven statewide strategic plan for communications interoperability. The CIC, in coordination with the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety (SPS) and the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness (OCP), oversees the implementation of the key goals and initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability.

Because the support of local and state level leadership is critical to the successful implementation of the strategic plan, the governance model encourages transparency, accountability, and collaboration through:

- Leadership representative of broad spectrum of local level first responders
- Participatory decision making
- The support of legislation that enforces timely and cost efficient implementation of equipment and systems
- Relationship building at the local, regional, state, and federal levels
- Outcome based strategic planning

The purpose of this document is to describe the membership, roles, responsibilities, and operating guidelines for each party involved in the Virginia Interoperability Governance structure. The structure consists of an Executive Committee, Advisory Committee, and Initiative Action Teams and emphasizes participation by and representation of local public safety practitioners. The roles and responsibilities of these groups result in a collaboratively designed governance model that supports an ongoing participatory approach to drive the implementation of the strategic plan.

Background

Inadequate and unreliable wireless communications have been issues plaguing public safety organizations for decades. Local and state public safety play a critical role in all emergency or routine public safety communications as more than 90 percent of the Nation's communications infrastructure and well over 95 percent of the personnel and other resources are local and state. In many cases, agencies do not have adequate radio spectrum (channels or frequencies) to perform their mission critical duties. As a result, they are unable to communicate or share critical voice or data information via radio with other jurisdictions in day-to-day operations, natural disasters, emergency response scenarios and terrorist incidents.

The problem of public safety communications and interoperability cannot be solved by any one entity alone. It will require a partnership among public safety organizations, governments at all

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levels, and industry. Those with experience in past and ongoing efforts to improve public safety communications and interoperability know that this problem cannot be solved quickly and will require significant funding.

The Commonwealth Interoperability Coordination Office (CICO), led by the CIC, rapidly evolved as the Coordinator's role became more defined. The CICO functions primarily as an organization to coordinate initiatives, communicate information, and facilitate discussions on interoperability efforts between and among the Commonwealth's regions and jurisdictions as well as the federal government.

In taking steps to establish goals and initiatives to support the mission, it was determined that a statewide strategic plan was necessary to guide future interoperability efforts. The Commonwealth requested assistance and guidance from the federal SAFECOM¹ program to employ a collaborative process, based on a local public safety practitioner driven approach, to develop a statewide strategic plan for communications interoperability.

The locally-driven strategic planning process included six regional focus group sessions that captured perspectives from local public safety responders throughout the Commonwealth and served as the basis for the mission, vision, and initiatives, which were presented at a final strategic planning session. The outcome of the strategic planning session was consensus of the mission, vision, and recommended key initiatives based primarily on the data gathered from the regional focus group sessions.

The planning process resulted in a fiscal year 2005 – 2007 Strategic Plan with four key goals and supporting initiatives with performance measures to assess the progress in achieving the key goals. The key goals are:

- Establish communications interoperability as a high priority
- Expand the statewide use of a common language and coordinated communication protocols
- Increase interoperability capabilities and coordination by maximizing the use of existing communications systems and equipment and by planning for future technology purchases
- Enhance the knowledge and proper use of existing and future communications equipment by providing frequent and routine training for public safety personnel.

The Commonwealth has committed to review and modify the key goals and initiatives on an annual basis based on performance and input from the public safety community.

The locally-driven approach focuses on meeting the needs of the local public safety practitioners. As such, it is essential to have the support and involvement of local public safety responders as well as state and local leaders to successfully implement the initiatives outlined in the strategic plan.

¹ The SAFECOM program has a mission to help local, tribal, state, and federal agencies improve public safety response through more effective and efficient interoperable wireless communications.

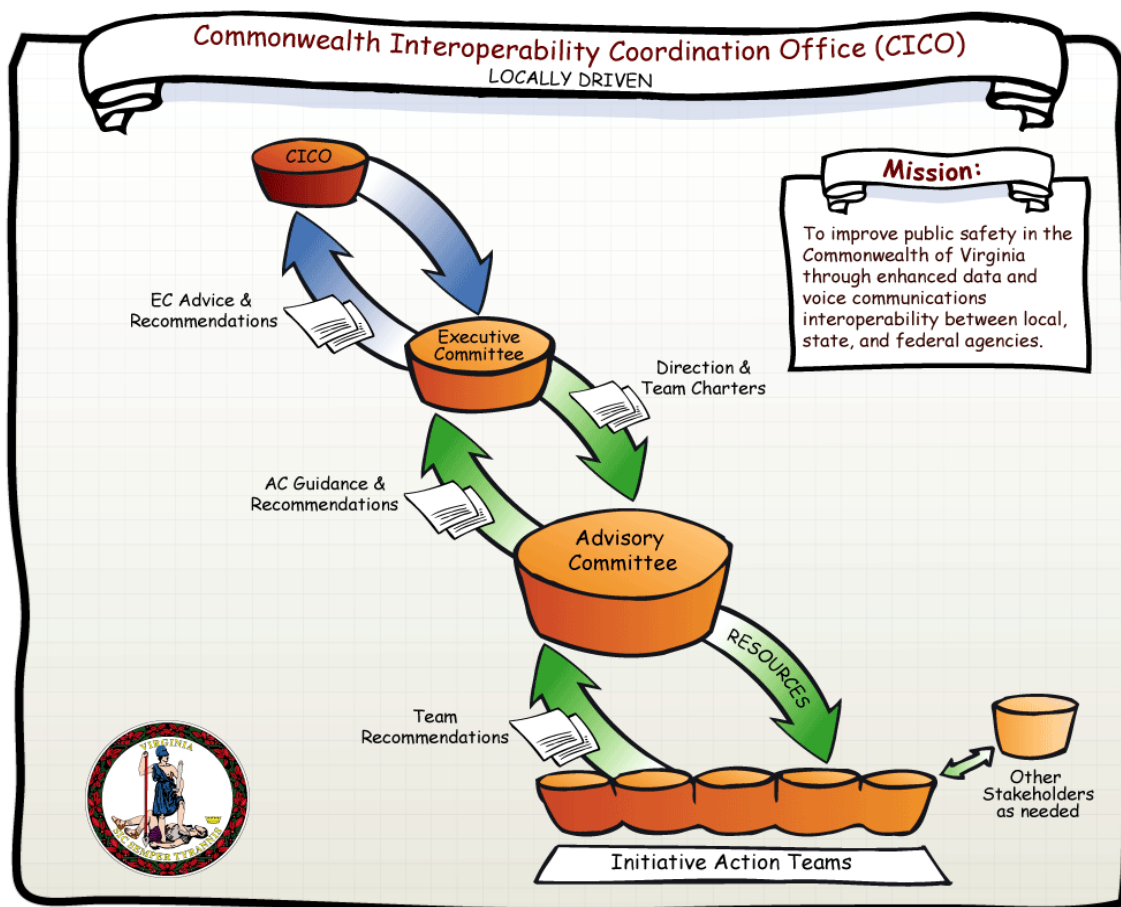
VIRGINIA INTEROPERABILITY GOVERNANCE

The Virginia Interoperability Governance model relies on two primary objectives:

- **Performance:** contribution to the overall performance and delivery of services to the public safety community and ultimately the larger constituency they serve.
- **Adherence:** commitment to ensuring that requirements of the law, regulations, and community standards of accountability and transparency are met.

The CIC position will lead Virginia's interoperability efforts; however, a group of key stakeholders representing various disciplines, jurisdictions, and levels of government will play an important role in creating and sustaining partnerships essential to the governance structure. These stakeholders can share knowledge and resources across the Commonwealth and ensure that true value is provided to the public safety community and to citizens. The following is a graphic depiction of the high-level flow of information and communications between components of the governance structure (Fig A).

Figure A: Virginia Interoperability Governance Structure



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The success of the governance model is, in part, contingent on committing to shared principles. Stating expectations and measures for success afford governing bodies the highest degree of collaboration across stakeholder groups. As such, the Virginia Interoperability Governance leadership will strive to:

- Set goals to encourage strategic thinking
- Promote a results driven approach
- Cultivate productive working relationships across diverse groups

The Relationship and Partnership with Public Safety

The public safety community must have a way to provide input into the advising and decision making processes for any statewide interoperable communications effort. Public safety personnel will participate in Virginia Interoperability Governance in all three groups: (1) as members of the Executive Committee, (2) as members of the Advisory Committee, and (3) as participants in each Initiative Project Teams.

Achieving interoperability requires partnerships from all levels of government. The public safety community will be invited to participate primarily through state and national associations². These groups represent the key public decision makers and those with the authority to fund public safety communication initiatives at the local and state levels and achieve a political and geographic balance.

Effectively leveraging organizations already in existence allows for a network to be established at the state level that exemplifies the effectiveness of a collaborative working model across all stakeholder groups. Two state level organizations already in existence are the Secure Commonwealth Panel (SCP) and the Commonwealth Preparedness Working Group (CPWG):

- **SCP:** responsible for monitoring and assessing the implementation of statewide prevention, response and recovery initiatives and when necessary, reviewing, evaluating and proposing recommendations relating to emergency preparedness in the Commonwealth. Members of the panel include representatives of local and state government, state legislators, and the private sector.
- **CPWG:** responsible for coordinating state operations related to preparedness and readiness. Members of the group have operations leadership roles in a broad range of state agencies.

To maximize interoperability efforts and avoid duplication, the CICO will coordinate with SCP and CPWG.

² There are two reasons for this approach: (1) the associations represent the leadership of their respective constituencies and (2) as demonstrated by the National Task Force on Interoperability (NTFI), the associations are an excellent way to reach out to these communities.

Commonwealth Interoperability Coordination Office

(I) Purpose

The Commonwealth Interoperability Coordination Office, led by the Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator, is responsible for the daily operations of Virginia's Interoperability efforts, including implementing the initiatives outlined in the strategic plan. This includes developing and delivering reports and briefings, coordinating various state initiatives related to public safety interoperable communications, and assisting Initiative Action Team leads.

(II) Roles and Responsibilities

The Commonwealth Interoperability Coordination Office shall:

- Coordinate with the Commonwealth Preparedness Working Group on communications interoperability initiatives and funding efforts
- Work with the Executive Committee Chair to develop meeting schedules and agendas
- Collaborate with the Executive Committee to establish Initiative Action Teams to accomplish tasks associated with each initiative outlined in the Strategic Plan
- Provide guidance Advisory Committee members and Initiative Action Teams in preparing materials, presentations, issues summaries, etc., for Executive Committee consideration
- Serve as a liaison and consensus builder during meetings
- Act as conduit between Initiative Action Teams, Advisory Committee, and Executive Committee members as appropriate
- Coordinate projects and initiatives across the Commonwealth as appropriate regarding public safety interoperable communications
- Support the communications needs of the Advisory Committee and Executive Committee (e.g., make available project status updates)
- Provide communications and knowledge management support
- Plan, control and manage the task(s) to implement the strategic plan initiatives
- Monitor progress, challenges, and accomplishment made on achieving the goals and initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan
- Ensure deliverables are of high quality and address CICO goals
- Solicit input from public safety organizations
- Request resources from the Secretary of the Office of Public Safety and the Assistant for Commonwealth Preparedness, as required
- Brief the status of the initiatives and tasks at the Advisory Committee, Executive Committee, and CPWG meetings, when appropriate

(III) Rules of Engagement

The CICO needs to make certain that there is broad public safety community input prior to issuing a "deliverable." The CICO will help coordinate the document upon the Initiative Action Team lead's request. To accomplish this, there will be multiple layers of review as follows:

- Initial drafts will be provided to the Executive Committee
- Once reviewed, the documents will be forwarded to the Advisory Committee and other relevant organizations

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- The CICO will then review comments and recommendations
- The draft will be sent back to the Initiative Action Team for revision
- The Executive Committee and CICO will conduct a final review.
- Once the CICO has given final approval to the Initiative Action Team lead, it will be released as an official deliverable

State Interoperability Executive Committee

(I) Purpose

The State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC or Executive Committee) will serve as the steering group for the CIC and will evaluate the guidance and recommendations developed by the Advisory Committee. The Executive Committee will meet in person on at least a quarterly basis to review overall progress and approve the next set of goals and priorities. Between meetings, the CICO will track projects and provide information to the Executive Committee through email, conference calls and other appropriate means.

(II) Membership

The Executive Committee consists of 11 representatives from the local and state public safety associations and government.

One alternate will be designated for each member in the event that a member is unable to attend a meeting. The alternate must have equal authority to formulate advice and make decisions on behalf of their constituents. Designated alternates will be encouraged to attend all Executive Committee meetings and will be included on all SIEC correspondence to ensure familiarity with issues when asked to fulfill the responsibility of the SIEC members.

From time to time representatives from other organizations may be invited to participate in Executive Committee meetings to provide input beyond the members' existing capabilities or to provide subject matter expertise. In addition, the Executive Committee may schedule additional working sessions to involve a broader representation of interested groups.

(III) Membership Selection Process

The CIC, Secretary of the Office of Public Safety, and the Assistant for Commonwealth Preparedness will assist in selecting members from other organizations. The CIC will oversee the initial selection and constitution of the Executive Committee. The CIC will initially chair the Executive Committee and ensure that the group is constituted in accordance with governmental regulations and practices. Once established, the Executive Committee may elect or nominate the Chair and Vice Chair as well as additional members and participants as appropriate.

Those designated to be members of the Executive Committee should have the knowledge and authority to formulate advice and make decisions on behalf of their constituents, attend all or most of the pre-scheduled meetings and be available to respond to ad hoc requests from the Chair. The minimum required time commitment is approximately four hours per month as well as attendance at the quarterly meeting held in Richmond, Virginia.

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The membership, identified in Figure B, aims to represent first responder public safety agencies (Fire and EMS, local law enforcement) and state officials involved in interoperability efforts.

Figure B: State Interoperability Executive Committee

Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator
Office of the Secretary of Public Safety
Office of Commonwealth Preparedness
VA Association of Chiefs of Police
VA Association of Counties
VA Association of Governmental EMS Administrators
VA Association of Public Safety Communication Officials
VA Fire Chiefs Association
VA Municipal League
VA Sheriffs' Association
State Agencies Radio System (STARS)
Virginia Military Advisory Committee
Virginia Information Technologies Agency Telecommunications Division

(IV) Chair Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair shall:

- Be selected by the Executive Committee to serve a one year term
- Preside over all regular and, if required, special SIEC meetings
- Ensure a Executive Committee member presides over and oversees coordination of all Advisory Committee meetings
- Collaborate with the CIC on project and initiative support and funding related to the Commonwealth's communications interoperability efforts
- Oversee the coordination of the SIEC meetings, including setting the time and location
- Create and distribute an agenda for the SIEC meetings two weeks in advance of each meeting date and provide read-ahead material a week in advance
- Be responsible for all records of the SIEC including, but not limited to, the original charter, minutes, white papers, correspondence, and current membership enrollment

(V) Executive Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The members of the Executive Committee will play a key role in the definition and implementation of the initiatives outlined in the strategic plan. They will provide substantive guidance to the Advisory Committee, and Initiative Action Teams, as well as recommendations to the CIC, drawing upon their experience and knowledge of public safety needs and capabilities.

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The First Responder Interoperability Executive Committee members will:

- Recommend an approach of Virginia interoperability efforts, evaluate progress and approve changes in direction and scope for the overall strategy
- Provide advice, feedback, and support to the CICO
- Ensure local and regional interoperability efforts are in alignment with the statewide strategic plan
- Resolve issues requiring policy, procedural, or other business decisions as needed
- Represent and advocate for interoperable communications at more senior levels of government and among member constituencies
- Participate in periodic, pre-scheduled meetings
- Recommend additional Executive Committee and Advisory Committee members
- Prepare appropriate materials for Executive Committee review, as required
- Consider guidance and approve recommendations from the Advisory Committee and Initiative Action Teams

(VI) Rules of Engagement

Meetings

There will be a standing meeting calendar, maintained by the CIC, for the Executive Committee. The group will meet a minimum of once a quarter and more often when necessary. The CIC will propose the initial quarterly meeting dates for 2004/2005.

There will be an agenda and read-ahead materials for each meeting. The outcomes of each meeting will be documented in writing and communicated as appropriate. Typically meetings will be held in the Richmond, Virginia and will coincide with Advisory Committee meetings when appropriate to minimize travel burdens. In addition, meetings may be scheduled in conjunction with national or regional meetings that attract the participation of most SIEC members.

Costs

The CICO will support the costs, related to travel, of participating on the Executive Committee.

Decisions

- The Executive Committee will operate by consensus whenever possible. However, there may be times when the group will have to vote on issues. Each organization included in the Executive Committee will have one vote. SIEC members can abstain from voting on any issue if they so choose. One member may give another member permission to serve as a proxy on any vote.
- The Executive Committee shall act upon the agreement of a majority of the membership present and voting. Dissenting opinions should be aired and noted in the meeting minutes.
- Only recommendations (documents, policy positions, plans, etc.) that are provided to the SIEC members prior to the meeting shall be voted upon.
- The Chair shall vote when a decision cannot be reached or in the event of a tie.

State Interoperability Advisory Committee

(I) Purpose

The State Interoperability Advisory Committee (SIAC or Advisory Committee) will provide guidance to the Executive Committee. This guidance will incorporate the knowledge and expertise of representatives from the local, regional, state, and federal public safety and government practitioner community. The Advisory Committee will meet in person on at least a semi-annual basis to review overall progress as well as discuss and suggest priorities and initiatives for the Advisory and Executive Committees to address. Between meetings, and when appropriate, the Advisory Committee members may meet at Initiative Action Team levels. In addition, the CICO will track project initiatives and provide input to the SIAC members through email, conference calls and other appropriate means.

(II) Membership

The Advisory Committee will include all members of the Executive Committee (including their alternates). In addition, the Advisory Committee may include representatives of other public safety associations and federal agencies that provide direct and indirect support to the program.

One permanent alternate may be designated for each member in the event a member is unable to attend a meeting. The alternate must have equal authority to formulate advice and make decisions on behalf of their constituents. The membership of the Advisory Committee, and their designated alternates, will be subject to review by the Executive Committee.

In the event that the SIAC members encounter subject matter that warrants responsibility or input beyond the group's existing capabilities, the Advisory Committee may involve a broader representation of interested parties. Representatives from other organizations may be invited to participate in Advisory Committee meetings to provide such information. In addition, the Advisory Committee may schedule additional working sessions as needed to address task specific issues.

(III) Membership Selection Process

Those designated to be SIAC members will have the knowledge and authority to formulate advice and make recommendations on behalf of their constituents, attend all or most of the pre-scheduled meetings and be available to respond to ad hoc requests from the Executive Committee Chair and/or CICO. The time commitment includes attendance at conference calls, the semi-annual meetings, and additional group-level meetings scheduled throughout the year. Members who miss two consecutive meetings without representation may be removed from the Advisory Committee. The SIAC member agencies and organizations are identified in Fig C.

Figure C: First Responder Interoperability Advisory Committee

FRIEC Members (11):

Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator
Office of the Secretary of Public Safety
Office of Commonwealth Preparedness
VA Association of Chiefs of Police
VA Association of Counties
VA Association of Governmental EMS Administrators
VA Association of Public Safety Communication Officials
VA Fire Chiefs Association
VA Municipal League
VA Sheriffs' Association
State Agencies Radio System (STARS)
Virginia Military Advisory Committee (VMAC)

Additional Members:

VA Army National Guard
VA Department of Emergency Management
VA Department of Fire Programs
VA Department of Forestry
VA Department of Health
VA Department of Transportation
VA Information Technology Agency
VA Port Authority
VA State Police
700 MHz Committee
FCC Region 20 (NPSPAC – Northern VA)
FCC Region 42 (NPSPAC – rest of state)
Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association
NOVA Emergency Preparedness Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee
Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
Virginia National Emergency Number Association
Wireless E-911 Services Board
Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA)

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Capital Region Communications Committee
Virginia Local Government IT Executives (VaLGITE)
Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES)/ Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES)
At Large Fire
At Large Police
At Large EMS VA Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads

Additional groups and organizations to be considered for membership include: public works, local IT/communications, schools, Red Cross, local transportation, hospitals, amateur radio, and other additional EMS, Fire, and Law Enforcements organizations, as well as private sector representation including utilities and the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association.

(IV) Chair Roles and Responsibilities

A member of the Executive Committee will chair the Advisory Committee.

The Chair shall:

- Preside over all regular and, if required, special meetings
- Oversee the coordination of the meetings, including setting the time and location of such meetings
- Create and distribute a draft agenda and read-ahead material a week in advance of each meeting
- Be responsible for all records of the Advisory Committee, including but not limited to the original charter, minutes, white papers, correspondence, and current membership enrollment.

(V) Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Drawing upon their experience and knowledge of public safety and local and state needs and capabilities, the SIAC members will play an important role in the general direction and implementation of the initiatives outlined in Virginia statewide strategic plan.

The Advisory Committee will:

- Provide general guidance and recommendations to the Executive Committee
- Provide advice, feedback and support to the Executive Committee and CICO
- Participate in Initiative Action Teams to develop work products and recommendations as requested by the Executive Committee
- Communicate decisions, plans and results to relevant constituencies
- Participate in periodic, pre-scheduled meetings.

(VI) Rules of Engagement

Meetings:

There will be a standing meeting calendar for the Advisory Committee. The SIAC members will meet semi-annually, but may have more frequent meetings in the outset as it establishes action teams. The Advisory Committee will coordinate meetings with two of the Executive Committee

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quarterly meetings to focus on key initiatives, strategy, prioritization, and accomplishments. The CICO will maintain this calendar.

There will be an agenda and read-ahead materials for each meeting. The outcomes of each meeting will be documented in writing and communicated as appropriate.

Costs:

The CICO may support the costs, related to travel, of participating on the Advisory Committee.

Decisions:

- The Advisory Committee shall act upon the agreement of a majority of the membership present. Dissenting opinions should be aired and noted in the meeting minutes.
- Only recommendations (documents, policy positions, plans, etc.) that are provided to the SIAC members prior to the meeting shall be elevated to the Executive Committee if agreed upon by a majority of membership present.

Initiative Action Teams

(I) Purpose

Initiative Action Teams will be established to assist in the implementation of the key goals and supporting initiatives in the Statewide Strategic Plan. The Action Teams will be established through a detailed charter and timeline to undertake a specific project that will improve public safety interoperable communications across the Commonwealth.

The Action Teams will be directed primarily by the Advisory Committee and will leverage the expertise of the Executive and Advisory Committee members as well as local public safety practitioners and others as necessary to accomplish the project objective.

The results and recommendations that may be developed by an Action Team will be presented to the Executive Committee for consideration. Once approval, the Executive Committee will provide the recommendations to the CIC for acceptance.